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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: MAZHILIS LEADERS DISCUSS BILATERAL AGENDA
WITH THE AMBASSADOR

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: During separate January 16 meetings with the Ambassador, Mazhilis Speaker Ural Mukhamedzhanov and Mazhilis International Relations, Defense, and Security Committee Chairman Nurbakh Rustemov expressed hope that the Obama Administration would further strengthen bilateral ties. They asked for stepped up U.S. support for Kazakhstan's WTO accession, commencement of negotiations on a bilateral Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), Kazakhstan's graduation from Jackson-Vanik restrictions, and elimination of the annual human rights certification. Mukhamedzhanov and Rustemov promised quick Mazhilis action in ratifying the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) agreement. They said the Madrid commitments legislation incorporated "serious changes" that will move the country in a democratic direction. The Ambassador pressed for adoption of Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Terrorism Finance (AML/CTF) legislation. Mukhamedzhanov responded positively, explaining that the Kazakhstanis are also very interested in getting the legislation passed. END SUMMARY.

HOPE THAT OBAMA FURTHER STRENGTHENS BILATERAL TIES

13. (SBU) In separate January 16 meetings with the Ambassador, Mazhilis Speaker Ural Mukhamedzhanov and Mazhilis International Relations, Defense, and Security Committee Chairman Nurbakh Rustemov said they hoped the incoming Obama Administration would further strengthen the U.S.-Kazakhstan bilateral relationship. Mukhamedzhanov stressed the importance of continuing dialogue at the presidential level. Both Muzhamedzhanov and Rustemov took note of significant U.S.-Kazakhstan inter-parliamentary contacts -- including the November trip to the United States of a Rustemov-led Mazhilis delegation and several recent CODEL visits to Kazakhstan -- while Muzhamedzhanov pointed out that almost 30 percent of Mazhilis members are part of a Mazhilis caucus for cooperation with the U.S. Congress. The two asked for even more interactions between the Mazhilis and Congress. Rustemov, who also heads the ruling Nur Otan party's foreign relations office, said he would welcome opportunities for Nur Otan leaders to visit the United States to meet their counterparts in U.S. political parties.

14. (SBU) Noting that the United States is one of Kazakhstan's top economic partners, Mukhamedzhanov said Kazakhstan hopes for more

U.S. investment in the non-extractive sector and at the regional level and looks forward to implementation of the Public-Private Economic Partnership Initiative (PPEPI). Rustemov said that he would like OPIC to become more active in Kazakhstan. He stressed that WTO accession remains a Kazakhstani priority and asked for stepped up U.S. support in the accession process. The Ambassador reiterated U.S. support for the PPEPI. He said he had recently discussed WTO accession with Deputy Industry and Trade Minister Zhanar Aitzhanova, Kazakhstan's lead WTO negotiator, and noted that a senior USTR official would visit Kazakhstan in February to discuss accession issues.

REQUEST FOR MLAT NEGOTIATIONS, LIFTING JACKSON-VANIK

15. (SBU) Muzhamedzhanov and Rustemov both said that Kazakhstan would like to negotiate a bilateral Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) with the United States. The Ambassador promised to relay their request to Washington, but explained that Congress would first have to authorize such negotiations and that it would likely take a long time to finalize an agreement. He suggested that Kazakhstani Ambassador to the United States Yerlan Idrissov discuss an MLAT directly with Congress.

16. (SBU) Muzhamedzhanov and Rustemov also asked that we graduate Kazakhstan from Jackson-Vanik and remove the annual human rights certification. The Ambassador explained that a bilateral WTO accession agreement should pave the way to lifting Jackson-Vanik restrictions.

SWIFT ACTION PROMISED ON CTR AGREEMENT

17. (SBU) Mukhamedzhanov and Rustemov explained to the Ambassador

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that the Mazhilis had just received the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) agreement from the government, but promised that they would take swift action on ratification. Rustemov said that the aim was to get the agreement through the Mazhilis before State Secretary Kanat Saudabayev's trip to Washington the week of February 2. He indicated that the Mazhilis was not satisfied with the quality of the Kazakh-language version of text (NOTE: The agreement was executed in English and Kazakh. END NOTE), and hinted that the Kazakhstanis might request that we accept small revisions to the Kazakhstan-language version to improve the grammar.

"SERIOUS CHANGES" IN MADRID COMMITMENTS LEGISLATION

18. (SBU) Noting that parliament had recently approved the Madrid commitments legislation, Mukhamedzhanov said the amendments adopted to the election, political party, and media laws represent "serious changes" that will move the country in a democratic direction and toward compliance with European standards -- which is a key aim of Kazakhstan's Path to Europe Program. Rustemov admitted that not everyone is satisfied with the new legislation, but pointed to specific positive provisions, including one that will guarantee that at least two parties are represented in parliament.

POSITIVE REACTION ON AML/CTF LEGISLATION

19. (SBU) The Ambassador told Mukhamedzhanov that he understood that Kazakhstan began work on an Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Terrorism Finance (AML/CTF) law in 2006, but the legislation remains bottled up in the Mazhilis. We would like to see the legislation adopted as soon as possible, he stressed. This would be consistent with Kazakhstan's Path to Europe program, since Europe has strong AML/CTF legislation in place. Muzhamedzhanov responded positively, explaining that the Kazakhstanis are also very interested in getting the legislation passed.

HOAGLAND